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Author(s)	LEE, Poh Ping
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Japan's Relations with Southeast Asia: The Fukuda Doctrine and Beyond

LAM PENG ER, ed.

London and New York: Routledge, 2013, xvii+203 p.

The Fukuda Doctrine, enunciated in 1977, is one of the most important developments in Japanese relations with Southeast Asia after the Second World War. Marking the end of a low-profile policy that focused primarily on trade, the Doctrine suggests a Japanese willingness to assume the “responsibilities” that befit a big power in Southeast Asia, something many Americans and Southeast Asians had been urging Japan to do. But mindful of their war record in Asia and their domestic politics, Japan eschewed the approach of a “normal” big power, or what the editor of this book calls a neorealist approach. Thus, the use of military force was rejected and economic power, if used for political purposes, was only exercised indirectly. The emphasis of the Doctrine was on what was called a “heart-to-heart” relationship, an approach that attempted to cultivate the trust and goodwill needed to ensure some semblance of equality between a big power like Japan and a group of developing countries like ASEAN.

This book deems the Doctrine a Japanese foreign policy success. Largely an outcome of a conference organized on the 13th anniversary of the Doctrine in 2007,¹⁾ this book however, has chosen not only to treat the Doctrine purely in bilateral terms but also to go beyond to that of the relationship between the Fukuda Doctrine and the regional architecture i.e. East Asian community building. To consider these two themes, the editor has drawn on contributions from academics in Japan and ASEAN and from one Chinese scholar. In addition, someone who had a hand in drafting the Doctrine, an ex-Japanese ambassador, was included to provide the perspective of a policy maker.

The book begins with an introduction, after which, it is divided into three parts, of which the first examines the origins and norms of the Fukuda Doctrine since it was first announced, while the second considers the Doctrine, power, and order in Southeast Asia. The third section mainly expatiates on the wider aspect pertaining to the relationship of Japan and ASEAN with the East Asian community. Each section consists of three chapters. Lam Peng Er, the editor, in the introduction, sees significance in the Fukuda Doctrine not only in Japan-ASEAN and East Asian community terms, but also in terms of the establishment of new norms in the international relations of Asia. The major aspects of these norms are the renunciation of power politics based on military capabilities by Japan, a “heart-to-heart” and an equal relationship between Japan and ASEAN. Such norms are not consonant with neorealism, one of the major theories of international relations, and hence unlikely to last, if the neorealist theory applies here. Yet, according to Lam, the Doctrine

1) Another conference was held in Kuala Lumpur in 2007, organized by the Malaysian Association of Japanese Studies (MAJAS). A book also eventuated. See Lee and Md Nasrudin (2009).

has outlasted the Cold War and has undergirded Japan's relations with ASEAN into the twenty-first century. It could conceivably be valid for that of the East Asian community.

Lam also discusses, in the first chapter, the origins, ideas, and praxis of the Fukuda Doctrine, of which an interesting part is an account, albeit short, of how the diplomats drafted the Doctrine and how Fukuda put his stamp on it. Lam goes on to affirm how the Fukuda Doctrine and its spirit of tolerance should underpin an incipient East Asian community. In the second chapter, Edamura Sumio, a former ambassador and a key drafter of the Doctrine, gives the view of an insider. He believes the Doctrine represents diplomacy with vision and echoes Lam in regarding its applicability for a greater East Asia. Yamamoto Yoshinobu, in the third chapter, shows how great power relations have shaped the Doctrine. He argues nevertheless that there is some power element in the Doctrine—at least in practice and application—as it can be interpreted as a measure against, then as a soft counter to, the increasing influence of China. Despite that, he argues that the Doctrine should be considered in theoretical terms as a constructivist approach, a theoretical approach which has only recently come into vogue and something distinct from the neorealist approach.

Two ASEAN scholars, Rizal Sukma and Tang Siew Mun, and a Chinese scholar, Wang Jianwei contributed to the third section. Sukma, from Indonesia, explores how the bilateral relations can cope with the new strategic situation engendered by the power shift in Asia. He argues that an important first step towards this is for both Japan and ASEAN to identify the common challenges facing them in the political and security arenas and to find where their interests converge. He listed many challenges, one of which is to ensure the peaceful rise of China. Wang from China acknowledges that the conscious and purposeful cultivation of hard and soft power by Japan since the Doctrine has given Japan a reservoir of goodwill in the region. As a consequence, China cannot take a hard approach to Southeast Asia, and will likely compete with Japan as to who will be the better practitioner of the heart-to-heart approach. Tang, a Malaysian scholar, examines how Japan is perceived by the ASEAN states in the wake of the Doctrine. Agreeing that the Doctrine is one of Japan's most successful initiatives, he nevertheless thinks it ought to be examined in the light of the changing times and environment.

The third section deals with Japan, Southeast Asia and the East Asian community. In the seventh chapter, Kitti Prasirtsuk from Thailand gives one of the more detailed accounts of the roles Japan and ASEAN can play in an East Asian community. He concludes that through a combination of trade and investment plus cultural exchanges, Japan has advanced *de facto* regional integration in tandem with ASEAN. Yamakage Susumu, the doyen of Japanese scholars on Japanese relations with ASEAN, believes that as far as Japan and ASEAN are concerned, their relationship should remain the central hub of the complex multi-layered schemes of regional cooperation. Finally, Kikuchi Tsutomu argues that the Doctrine is still relevant despite the rise of regional institutions and a regime change in Japan (referring then to the replacement of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan [LDP] by the Democratic Party of Japan [DPJ]). He also states that it should be Japan's

priority to enhance unity and cooperation among Southeast Asian countries through ASEAN, just as the Doctrine had intended.

The book has done a good job of explaining the importance of the Fukuda Doctrine to those interested in bilateral Japanese-ASEAN relations as it is generally not much appreciated by specialists working on bilateral relations, concerned as they are with the economic penetration of Japan and its possible security posture in Southeast Asia: how much Japan's peace diplomacy or heart-to-heart approach has influenced Southeast Asian perceptions of Japan in a positive way. The book is also right in arguing for the centrality of Japan and ASEAN, and the validity of a heart-to-heart approach, in East Asian regionalism. But it has not made a fully convincing case. Present Sino-Japanese tensions suggest it will take time and very much effort before both nations can be reconciled by the norms of the Fukuda Doctrine to play positive roles in East Asian regional groupings. Furthermore, the book's treatment of theory is far too short. It may not be its main aim but it tantalizes with its rejection of neorealist theory. Could it not have expatiated a bit more on the constructivist theory suggested by Yamamoto Yoshinobu?

Finally, the book could have included the perspective of a scholar from the newer members of ASEAN, the so-called CLMV countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Even if the Doctrine began way before they joined ASEAN, the Doctrine was supposed to bridge Indochina and the old ASEAN. At any rate, an ASEAN 10 poses one of the great challenges facing ASEAN unity, something much desired by the Doctrine.

Lee Poh Ping 李宝平

Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya

Reference

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The Authority of Influence: Women and Power in Burmese History

JESSICA HARRIDEN

Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012, xiii + 370 p.

European visitors to Burma in the nineteenth century frequently remarked on what they perceived to be the startling freedom and equality enjoyed by Burmese women, and currently the “unofficial slogan” of the Union of Myanmar’s government-approved women’s organization states that “Myanmar women have enjoyed equal rights with Myanmar men since time immemorial” (p. 1). But